

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

Fourth Series?

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 58.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1865.

PRICE 1½d.

BURIED IN THE DEEP.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.—CHAP. I.

THE *Southern Cross* carried but few cabin passengers on her homeward voyage from Australia in the autumn of 1860. She was a small ship, and I have nothing to tell of her, or her crew, or her captain; no maritime adventures of thrilling interest, no dangers of the dreadful ocean, to be endured and escaped, remembered with recurrent terror and suspense, and told at home while some small precious hand lies in the tight grasp of reunion. Mine is not a tale of the sea; I am ignorant of everything concerning the science of navigation, though I 'went out' round the Cape of Good Hope, and 'came home' round Cape Horn. I wish I did know something about a ship and its handling, for then I might make you understand the ever-present and ever-changing delight of a long sea-voyage, which some people call tedious, and speak of as an abhorred necessity. To me it is a wonderful and delightful experience; and I have never felt so deeply the meaning of being a 'creature' of the Divine hand, as in the midst of the ocean, nor the full height and dignity of the intellectual gifts which the Creator has given to man. But I am ignorant, and therefore must be silent. The passengers on board the *Southern Cross* were only six, and of that number but two were ladies. I was returning to England nominally under the care of the captain, but in truth my staid middle age was admirably calculated to afford me all the protection I required. The other lady-passenger was a very different person. I cannot say I liked her, but there was something about her which attracted my attention. I felt obliged to watch her when she was present, and think about her when she was not. She did not make her appearance until we had been some days at sea; and when our captain inquired of her husband how she was, he replied that she was well, but not disposed to leave her cabin just yet.

I had not been quite free from curiosity about this lady, the only person of my own sex whom I was to see for many a long day.

When we had been a week at sea, she came into the saloon to dinner, walking by her husband's side; and after a sweeping circular bow, in which haughtiness contended with grace, she took the seat set apart for her at the right hand of Captain Marjoribanks.

It is difficult to describe her to you as I saw her first, because there intervenes between me and my impressions an ineffaceable remembrance of how it was I saw her last. Helen Stamer was about twenty-six years old; and I thought her, when I glanced at her, and then finding her attention engrossed by the captain, ventured to make a steadier and more prolonged inspection, the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

She was tall, slight, but not thin, and her figure had the peculiar undulating grace which we are accustomed to associate with the women of southern lands, but which I have seen as frequently, and in as much perfection, among my own countrywomen. Her small head sat firmly and proudly on her shoulders; and a profusion of glossy hair, of the richest and rarest brown, with golden and even red lights glimmering through its masses, was folded round and round in careful braids, the lowest resting on the back of her full white throat. She was very fair, and her cheeks had no distinct colouring—nothing beyond the faint carnation tinge under the skin, which emotion makes to flush and fade so beautifully.

The features were all harmonious, but the eyes arrested my attention by their beauty and their restlessness. Large and well-shaped, with straight thick eyelashes, and fine brows, a little darker than her hair, they were of the clearest, lightest, most limpid blue, but round the irides was a distinct circle of dark colour, which was, of course, not black, but yet for which I have no other name. As she spoke, she looked away from the person she addressed, back to his face, and then away again, a dozen times in the course of a couple of sentences. All she said was intelligent; her tone was refined, her pronunciation correct; but there was a total want of musical quality in her voice, and one of my impressions connected with it is singularly distinct.

Dinner was nearly over, and the quiet and rather dull conversation hitherto maintained was beginning to flag. We knew each other just too well in that little company for the scrupulous effort enjoined by politeness on utter strangers, and not well enough for the cheerful *abandon* of real companionship. Suddenly the doctor, a young Scotchman, addicted to puns and liquor, said something which made us all smile. Mrs Stamer burst into a long, loud, unladylike peal of laughter, so disproportioned to the amount of wit contained in Dr Alexander's remark, and at the same time so strikingly joyless, that I looked at her with astonishment, under which there lurked even then a vague unexplained dread. Her face carried out the impression of the sound she had uttered. The mouth had taken the mechanical shape of laughter, the regular, polished white teeth were displayed; but there was no more trace of a true expression of mirth in the expansion of the full red lips, than if they had been the fleshless gums of a skull. Again and again she made the same sound, and even the punster seemed astonished at the success of his own joke. At length she said, abruptly and harshly: 'I hate to be made to laugh.'

'Then you must not encourage the only jester amongst us by laughing so heartily, Mrs Stamer, or he will be too vain to resist the temptation,' said the captain good-humouredly.

Mrs Stamer and I got on very well together, though we were such opposites in everything. She was not an equable or complacent person, and I dare say had there been more ladies on board, there would have been less tranquillity. But when there are only two persons to contend any point, unless it be one of moral value and importance, the older and more learned in life's lesson of the real worthlessness of one's own way, will generally yield it to the younger, who preserves the ardour of illusions. I then thought her impulsive and selfish, 'spoiled' I called it; but as I have already said of her, that which is to come troubles and clouds my memory. She had some very teasing habits. I often wondered at them, for she was perfectly well-bred in everything, and I sometimes thought I should like to tell her of certain little things which were selfish and troublesome, but I could not. Even now, when I understand them all, I cannot tell you what it was that restrained me. It was not that this beautiful, rich, dignified young woman was proud or disdainful, or that the reticence and distaste inspired by conscious inferiority deterred me. Strange to say, so far from envying Helen Stamer, I felt an undefined compassion for her, a sense of pity, I knew not wherefore, which distressed and disquieted me. When we sat together on the deck, as in the fine weather we constantly did, and had an hour's quiet conversation, directed to some particular subject, and which held steadily to its course, I caught myself experiencing a satisfaction absurdly disproportionate to its origin. Mrs Stamer was very idle, and as I have a constitutional abhorrence of an interregnum of employment, this annoyed me. At first I used to pause a polite moment or two in my own occupation, to see whether she was preparing any, but I soon learned that that was an unavailing hint. She would express a desultory kind of interest in my needle-work, but she never worked. She would ask me what I had been reading, and would even rummage among my books, in a manner which I did not at all approve, but she never read. She

could draw beautifully, I knew, for I had seen a portfolio containing some sketches and figure-drawings in pencil and in chalks; but not one among them was finished.

I recall with a painful thrill the day she shewed me that portfolio. She also opened and turned out the contents of a very handsome drawing-box, fitted with every modern appliance for the pursuit of the art, and tossing them carelessly on her cot, left the state-room with me. The same afternoon, as I was reading, while lying in my cot, from whence I could speak to her through the open doors of our respective rooms, I heard a cutting noise, which I recognised as the sound of sharpening pencils. I gave the circumstance only a passing thought, and read on and on. Suddenly, after the lapse of an hour or more, I became conscious of the continuance of the sound, and called out: 'What a supply of pencils you must have, Mrs Stamer. Are you going to finish the whole set of drawings in earnest?' She made no answer; but the next moment her rich dress swept by the open door, and I heard her ascend the stairs. On leaving my cabin, some time after, I glanced into hers, and saw with a peculiar sense of startled discomfort, for which I could not account, the coverlet of her cot, and the small expanse visible of the floor, covered with innumerable shreds of pencil. I felt an extraordinary amount of agitation at this sight—unaccountable agitation; I tried to calm myself by saying: 'This is a senseless burst of temper; my remarks on the unfinished drawings irritated her;' and so I went on deck, pondering gravely on the defects of her bringing-up, and their consequences, in this indulgence of childish spleen; and dimly conscious all the time of something that lurked unacknowledged in my own mind beneath this plausible explanation.

That day at dinner, Mrs Stamer was peculiarly silent, and I noticed that the habitual shadow on her husband's face was darker than it had been. I have said little of Helen's husband, and in truth I thought little about him then. Mr Stamer was a tall handsome man, perhaps thirty-five years of age, with a grave anxious face, and an abstracted manner. His bearing was that of a man habituated to good society; and his conversation, though not strikingly intellectual, denoted a careful education and cultivated taste. Even to his beautiful wife, his manner had an undemonstrative politeness, but to which she appeared profoundly indifferent. I occasionally remarked his anxious expression, and sometimes wondered what could be its cause. He was a rich man; I knew this, not only by the luxuries with which they were surrounded, but from what Helen had told me. She had a pleasant way of telling stories sometimes, and one day had given me a graphic account of their voyage out and its motive. Mr Stamer's only brother had died in Melbourne, possessed of great wealth, and they had gone out from England to claim it, and settle his affairs. Mr Stamer had not been able to trace all his brother's property; a few thousands of pounds had undoubtedly been lost—so I set down the shadow on his face to avarice and discontent on that score. I was as wrong as I have always been when I have formed, from insufficient premises, a hasty and uncharitable conclusion.

I have said Helen's manner to her husband was indifferent; true, I never detected any

interruption of friendly relations between them, but as surely I never saw anything like love. She interested me more and more, though she repelled me, I could not tell why; she forced me to observe her; she held me in a kind of fascination. Mrs Stamer seldom spoke of her husband, but when she did, there was not the least embarrassment in her tone or manner; there was nothing that the most determined fancy could twist into an indication of matrimonial misery, or romantic sorrow. Indeed, I never knew a less sorrowful person than Helen Stamer. It has been my lot to encounter several individuals whom I believe to be undowered with the faculty of grief, and of all those whom I have met, I believe Helen Stamer to have been the most utterly incapable of that grand and solemn feeling. She was rather irritable, troublesome, and whimsical to a degree; and yet, in a strange, enigmatical, contradictory way, she was foolishly regardless of herself. I am conscious that I am lingering over this part of my story; it is because I would fain recall her as I saw her first, and keep the first and the last apart in my memory.

The monotony of life at sea is confusing, and the occurrence of any great and terrible event has a tendency to turn all that preceded it into a chaotic heap, so that distinct features are lost. I cannot tell how long it was after the incident that had so inexplicably shocked me, that I began to remark Helen Stamer's destructive propensities. One evening, when her husband was sitting near us, she began to sing, bursting suddenly into one of Henry Russell's spirited melodies. The sounds were as discordant as the braying of an ass. No doubt, my far too expressive countenance betrayed the acute annoyance they caused me, for Mr Stamer exclaimed harshly and impatiently: 'Hush, Helen; you know you cannot sing, and nothing is so tormenting to people who love music as an attempt like yours.'

Distressed for her, and displeased with myself for my inadvertent betrayal of my feelings, I looked up, and said something in an apologetic tone; but Helen turned upon me a face of utter indifference, as if she had not heard her husband's rebuke, and her joyless laugh rang out over the calm and slumbering sea.

That night, I found several of my most valued books in a heap of torn fragments on my cabin floor. How shall I tell the sickness of heart which came over me, the dull, cold terror! There was something devilish in this deed; it was no freak of childish petulance, such as I had tried to persuade myself the former incident had proceeded from. A nameless fear froze my heart, as I recognised, and then put from me the interpretation of these things, and thought of the long weeks during which I must remain in close contact with Helen Stamer. When we met in the morning, in place of our usual cordial salutation, I restricted my greeting of Mrs Stamer to a formal and frigid bow. Mr Stamer looked surprised, but Helen appeared wholly unconscious of the change. During that day I watched her closely; she occupied herself chiefly in mischief, but confined her destructiveness to her own property. Thus, as she sat talking with me, quite in her usual way—for her unconsciousness of having given me offence, whether genuine or pretended, completely bore down and set aside my contemplated rebuke of silence or

reserve—she tore a fine cambric handkerchief to pieces, then possessed herself of my scissors, and cut each strip into tiny morsels. I looked about anxiously for Stamer, but he was writing in his cabin, and I dared not interrupt him with intelligence of his wife's extraordinary occupation. The intentness of her face as she pursued it, with a kind of suppressed fury in her features, and the jerking, passionate movement of her eager, lithe, slender hands had a horrible effect on me. After she had destroyed the handkerchief, she drew from her pocket a pair of gloves, which she had never worn, and deliberately cut them to pieces. This was past bearing with, and I said indignantly: 'For shame, Mrs Stamer! Can you find no amusement except in such wanton destruction?'

Again she laughed the hard laugh, and said: 'I am never amused, and sometimes I must cut things to pieces, I must—I must!' A shallow light was in her eyes; her lips were sharply distended, and set over her teeth; her busy fingers tore the pieces of kid into yet smaller morsels; and the dim fear and doubt in my mind sprang up in that moment into full-grown conviction. I felt perfectly sure that she was watching me closely, and was instinctively conscious that the longer I could prevent her making the discovery that I had found out the truth, the better it must be for us both. I controlled my countenance with a success which I read in the expression of hers, and in an unflinching voice proceeded to interrogate this woman as directly as I thought it safe to venture upon.

'I suppose you are very glad to return to England after so long an absence?'

'No,' she replied; 'I do not like England.'

'Indeed,' said I; 'yet all your friends live there. Do you not like to return to your own place and your duties?'

'No,' she said, drearily and vacantly; 'I do not care. I don't like to do anything but ride; and they won't let me ride.'

'Why?' said I curiously, for there was a smouldering anger in her face, which was a totally new expression.

She glanced at me, shifted her eyes from mine, pulled angrily at the fragment between her fingers, and uttered an uneasy short laugh, in which there was a sound like the growl of a provoked animal, but made no reply.

'Why?' I repeated, in a tone of quiet persistence, like that by which one forces an answer from a refractory child. She looked up again, and the keen blue eyes dilated, and their dark rims grew more dark.

'Don't ask me,' she said, and there was in her voice something like a jeer and something like a threat strangely mingled. 'You would not like to know. You are a squeamish person; I know you are. You turned pale the other day when Dr Alexander told us how the cook's boy had crushed his foot; and you can't bear to know when they kill a sheep on board; so don't ask me. My horse—such a handsome, spirited beast he was!—died one day: that's all.'

A horrid feeling of fear and sickness came over me as she laughed again, and then checked the sound with sudden unnatural abruptness. Pity—infinite, agonising compassion—had been my first instinctive feeling, when I fully perceived the truth; but it faded before the disgust, the nameless horror with which her words, and still more

her manner, as she spoke thus vaguely of something under which I knew a horrid meaning lurked, filled me. Helen Stamer was right; I am a 'squeamish' woman; and I knew such squeamishness as mine might create in me dislike and repulsion towards her, which would have made me powerless to devise and render aid, should the need for it arise.

By this time, the gloves were utterly demolished, and she was busily engaged in cutting into fragments the rich lace-trimming of her shining silk-dress.

'Are you aware, Mrs Stamer,' said I, 'that you are destroying your dress? Pray, give me those scissors.' As I spoke, I stretched out my hand, and quietly but firmly took them from her. She did not resist me; her hands dropped down by her side, and she looked—vacantly now—over the ship's decks at the foaming and seething waves.

'I hope you are not often so mischievously disposed,' I said, with a sufficiently lamentable attempt at a gay and unrestrained tone. 'If you go on in this way at home, your maid must have a busy time of it.'

I had observed, with surprise, that Mrs Stamer, of whose wealth and station no other adjuncts were wanting, had no personal attendant, and my observation was inspired by a desire to learn the motive of the omission.

'My maid,' she repeated in a vacant tone, once more turning her eyes on me. The next moment they were lighted up by a gleam of almost ferocious expression, and she said in a tone of exultation: 'Ah, yes! I remember. A passage was taken for her, and at the last moment she refused to come home with me. Do you know why?'

'If No; how should I?' But I thought, I can guess, and I admire the woman's discretion.

'Well, I'll tell you. She was very fond of birds—pets of all sorts indeed—and would whimper like a baby if any one hurt her little beasts. She had a cage of those songless creatures they call birds out there—and she pointed backwards to the track behind the ship, 'and—— But there, you are turning pale! I shall not tell you the funny story of the dumb things that had no business to be dumb; it would make you ill perhaps.' The mockery of her tone was only equalled by the fierce scorn in her face, as she suddenly leaned towards me, until her eyes were on a level with mine, and burst into a peal of discordant laughter.

No effort could enable me to repress an exclamation of anger, as I rose hurriedly from my seat, and retreated to my cabin.

LOCAL LEGISLATION.

THE history of local government in many towns, a century or two ago, is little else than a record of strong endeavours to keep up a system of monopoly. Many corporations being self-elected, the reins of power were thus kept in the hands of a few families; and as is not unfrequently the case with governments upon a more extended scale, the rulers took care to look after their own kith and kin. If a member of one of these corporations retired, was dismissed from his office, or died, the remaining members chose his successor; and it can easily be understood that they managed to elect a person whose views were as limited and selfish as their own. All corporations, however,

were not alike, and some of them seem to have shewn a very praiseworthy zeal in legislating for the benefit of others. It is satisfactory to find that morality of life and conversation was deemed an essential qualification for the office of mayor or councillor. At Lichfield, it was ordered, that if a member of the corporation should be guilty of 'immorality or other abominable crime,' he should be 'monished;' and if afterwards persisting in his evil courses, he should be dismissed from his office. The law of the burgh of Preston provided that 'no man who shall be known and accepted a drunkard, a vicious or incontinent person, or of other bad conversation,' should be admitted to serve the town. If any one already appointed to a corporate office was found guilty of 'such unseemly conversation of life,' he was to be removed from his office for three years, when, if he had reformed, he was to be re-elected. The Leicester corporate accounts contain many notices of fines and dismissals for such conduct. The Preston law also ordered, that if any one, 'sworn upon the council for the welfare of the town,' guilty of tale-bearing, and of 'showing the poverty of the said town,' should be 'put out from the fellowship of the council, and with them no more to be believed.' In 1642, the authorities of the same town enacted, that any member of the corporation 'revealing any of the town business,' should be fined six shillings and eightpence for the first offence, double that amount for the second, and be dismissed for the third. At Liverpool, any member of the 'common hall' disclosing the proceedings was fined five pounds. At Worcester, the fine was thirteen shillings and fourpence; and at that town (temp. Henry VIII.) it was ordered, 'that if ther bee eny wyndowes, durs, or holes of new made in the yelde-hall, wherthrough eny person may so her or have knowledge what is don in the said hall, that hit bee stopped by the doers or users of hit, upon paine of xijja. iiijd.' By the same act, people were prohibited from 'playing at the tenys' in the public hall.

Our ancestors seem to have had a praiseworthy horror of news obtained in an underhand manner, and the enactments with reference to listeners or 'eavesdroppers' were very numerous. At Hartlepool, the fine for 'lystening about anie man's wyndowes to here his secretes,' was twelvecence. At Lancaster, the fine for 'an eavesdropper standing under anie man's eaves, wall, or window,' was three shillings and fourpence; in addition to which, those detected were to be carted about the town, 'and then expelled forth.' The authorities of Liverpool punished a man for 'listening under the church-wall to what the jury did say.' It appears to have been requisite for a man to possess a small balance at his banker's before he aspired to municipal honours, for in many towns, whenever money was required by the mayor on account of any public works, the councillors and 'the forty' were assessed at so much each, and ordered to produce the money forthwith. At Leicester, upon one occasion, money does not seem to have been very plentiful, for the authorities ordered that 'one of the bells of St Peter's shall be sold to repair the school-house.' This appears to have been an exceptional case. When presents for political and other reasons were made to visitors, noble and plebeian, if the town-purse was empty, a levy was made upon the members' purses; and to

judge from the quantity and variety of the gifts, the calls must have been made very frequently.

In November 1567, 'the town stock' at Leicester 'having been decayed by great gifts to noblemen, and women, and others, as also at the banquets of venison, of gifts and rewards given to players, musicians, jesters, noblemen's bearwards, and such-like,' the mayor enacted that from that date each member of the council should pay his share of the expenses of the dinner, and also that 'in future, no manner of gift be given to any noble person—out of the town stock—except by consent of the whole body.' The council, however, gave the mayor power to bestow 'five shillings, or under the value thereof, as oft as occasion shall move him;' and also proclaimed the enactment 'to be for ever.' Upon one occasion when the corporate body had offended the Earl of Huntingdon, they decided that the best means of appeasing him was that of making a present to his lady, 'as a token of contrition.' They sent her a horse, which she refused to accept; but the groom had orders to remain a few weeks, 'until she changed her mind.' He stayed three months—at the expense of the corporation, and at the expiration of that time returned from his unsuccessful mission. When the Earl of Leicester visited the borough, 'the pseyrent given him' by the corporation 'was a hogges heade of clarrett wyne w^{ch} cost iiijl. xs.; and two verye fatt oxen w^{ch} cost xx marks.' He seems to have fared well; for in 1593, when the assizes were held in the church, the present to Sir Richard Hastings, Knight, consisted of only two loaves of sugar, a small quantity of pepper, ginger, currants, raisins, biscuits, caraways, and 'one pound of comforts;' valued altogether at two pounds eleven shillings; and the Lord Anderson, Chief-justice of England, had to make himself happy with 'a bottle of white wine, do. of clarrett, do. of sack, and a pound of suger;' of the total value of six shillings. This economy was exceeded by the Shrewsbury officials, for the corporate records of that town, for the same period, contain an item, 'paid to a pound of suger for my Lord Stafford, 16d.; a dozen of cakes for the Erle of Essex, 2s.' Preston must have been a good place to visit in those days, for the mayor of that borough was allowed to expend 40s. whenever he thought fit, 'for the honour and worship of the town in entertaining, &c.' In several towns, the bailiffs were held liable for the rates, and frequently had to pay them. At Liverpool, in consideration of this fact, they were authorised by a special enactment to retain the ransom-money paid for 'dogges and geese and hogges' found trespassing in the corn-market. Every alderman of Richmond was ordered to provide, at his own expense, a dinner and supper, twice a year, for the recorder and twelve burgesses. At Lancaster, a similar by-law was passed. The corporations of several towns paid the salaries of the working officials. At Lancaster, the mayor had to pay twentypence, and the councilmen and bailiff fourpence each towards the swineherd's wages. Taking all these things into consideration, perhaps it was only fair that they should have a few privileges as compensation. In some places, they had a decided monopoly. The mayor of Hartlepool possessed one right that would surprise some of our modern mayors: in the year 1599, the council of that town enacted, 'that the spoutes of the church bee used in comon in the tyme of rayne, and the water to bee p'ted equallye

betweene p'tie and p'tie, *only one spoute to be reserved for the maior, upon payne for everie one soe violating this order, iiijd.*

At Evesham, in the year 1611, the mayor's court ordered that 'no victualer or alehouse-keeper shall after the first of March brew either beer or ale, but shall have the same of the common brewers assigned, whereof Mr Philip Parsons of the common council is appointed to be one, under pain of 10s., one half to the borough, the other to the informer.' This fine seems small in comparison with others enforced upon other offenders against the corporation; for at Hartlepool, in the year 1600, it was enacted that any one calling a member of the council 'a liar be fined 11s. vid.;' but if he only said that the individual was 'false,' he escaped with a fine of six shillings and eightpence. At Liverpool, the importance of the corporation appears to have been still higher, for although the fine for striking an ordinary individual was a few shillings, it was enacted that any one even only abusing an alderman was to be fined L.20. At Rye, it was ordered that if any man 'saith him evil' of the mayor, he was to be 'immediately taken and grievously punished by his body;' but if he struck the mayor, 'he that striketh him shall lose the hand that he striketh with.' In spite, however, of these severe enactments, the lower orders upon many occasions seem to have been imbued with a spice of the Sartor Resartus spirit, and to have been sadly deficient of respect for their mayors. At Chester, in the month of October 1619, 'according to the usual custom of the mayor presently out of office, it chanced a contention fell out betwixt the butchers and the bakers of the citye about their dogges their byghtynge: they fell to blows, and in the tumult manye people would not be pacyed, so that the maior seeing ther was gret abuse, being cityzens, could not forbear, but he in person himself went out amongst them to have the peace kept; but they in their rage, lyke rude and unbroken fellowes, dyd lyttill regarde himm. In the ende they parted; and the beginners of the sayd brawle, being found out and examined, were committed to the Northgate.' After all, mayors are but human, and it is refreshing to find one of them forgetting his robe. It must be confessed that before the brawl came to an end, 'the maior smote freely amongst them, and he broke his white staff;' a somewhat unsophisticated way of keeping the peace; 'and the cryer, Thomas Knoustley, broke his mase.'

In many boroughs, the mayor possessed almost unlimited authority. At Rye, he had the power of sentencing to death any offender proved guilty. The old law of that place enacted, that 'when anie is found cutting a purse, or of taking and picking silver, or anie other money, out of anie purse in the market-place, or anie other place, the said cut-purse or pick-purse shall have one of his ears cut off from his head; and then he shall be led unto the towne's end, and there to swear and to abjure never to come within the towne again, upon pain of losing his other ear; and to abjure the towne upon pain of losing his life; and if he be found the other time (i.e., the third time), he shall suffer the judgment.' It was part of the bailiff's duty to hang these poor wretches. It is hardly to be believed that at Sandwich many criminals were buried alive. At Romney, the prosecutor, in cases of felony, had to hang the prisoner, unless he could provide a

substitute, the town-bailiff merely providing the gallows and rope. Many of the old enactments had reference to the gentle sex, and hinted in a mild manner of cuck-stools and branks, and other Maine-law-ish preventives. At Lichfield, it was enacted that any 'woman misruled, called a common sinner, the constable shall sit her upon the cuckstoole.' Ladies of uncertain temper, designated, in that rude age, 'common scolds,' were to be punished similarly. Men generally were placed in the pillory; but at Lancaster, males also were elevated upon the cuck-stool, and plunged into the pond. At Leicester, instead of the mountain coming to Mohammed, Mohammed went to the mountain, for the cuck-stool was carried to the door of the lady's house; and after she had taken the required bath, she was carried to the four gates of the town. The authorities of the latter town also enacted that 'no woman hang clothes upon the town cross, and that no woman wash clothes or other corruption at the common well;' and surely this was going far enough, without fining them for gossiping at the town-wells on Sunday mornings, as was the case at Preston. We must not think unkindly, however, of the authorities of that town, for they also passed a law enacting, that if any one called a woman unchaste, 'and complaint be made thereof, and witnesses be absent, she may clear herself by her own oath; and he by whom it was said shall do this justice, that he shall take himself by the nose, and say he hath spoken a lie, and shall be pardoned.' The proper observance of the Sabbath was the object of much legislation. At Chester, a law was passed ordering that, 'for avoiding of idleness, all children of six years old and upwards shall, on week-days, be sent to school, or some virtuous labour . . . and on Sundays and holidays they shall resort to their parish churches; and in the afternoon, all the said male children shall be exercised with bows and arrows, pins and pointers; and that the parents furnish them with bows and arrows, pins and pointers, for that purpose;' yet down to the year 1657, if not to a much later period, the court met for business, and the mayor also sat for the administration of justice on Sabbath-days.

At Banbury—immortalised by Drunken Barnaby as the residence of

The puritane one,
Hanging of his cat on Monday,
For killing of a mouse on Sunday—

it was ordered, in the year 1564, that 'no man nor woman, of what degre or occupayton, shall, upon the Sabot day or other festyvall daye, sett oppe ther shoppe wyndowes;' and also that people should abstain from 'mannual occupayton,' and also from the sale of ale. At Leicester, where it was enacted 'that there be of everie house one at everie sermon, and on Wednesdays and Fridays, upon pain of everie householder making default to pay iijd.,' publicans and shopkeepers were ordered to keep their houses closed during service-time; and butchers were not to sell after seven o'clock on Sunday mornings. In the year 1616, the Preston council enacted, not only that street-doors should be kept closed during divine service, but also that children above seven years of age should not play in the streets, 'or sit at the doors in the street;' and in 1662, they 'ordered, concluded, condescended, and fully agreed upon' a similar

law. The corporation of Leicester seems to have been very anxious about the piety of the people, for, in the year 1575, they ordered that 'everie child eight years of age and upwards shall be taught the Lord's Prayer, the articles of their belief, and also to answer certain points of the Catechism, upon penalty to the parent of 3d. a-piece, or three days' imprisonment.' The churchwardens were in the habit of lodging complaints against careless individuals who neglected their opportunities of spiritual improvement. In 1662, the Prestonians did not flock to the parish church as they ought to have done, for the council passed a by-law that an act of parliament (1 Eliz. cap. 11) 'be from henceforth put into execution; and that every person in the borough above twenty-one years of age shall diligently and faithfully attend divine service upon every Sunday or Lord's day; or other days of thanksgiving and humiliation appointed by law, and there abide orderly and soberly;' or be fined 12d., 'to and for the use of the poor of the borough.' A churchwarden was selected whose duty it was to take notice of the absentees, and 'deliver and present' their names to the jury. The churchwardens of Childwall in 1635 'presented' several individuals for absenting themselves from the parish church, two others for 'usually sleeping in ye church at ye tyme of divine service;' a crime perhaps attributable to the clergyman. At Liverpool, the punishment extended beyond the real offender, for several people were punished by the corporation for 'lodging guests which doe not goe to church.' The minister of the latter town does not appear to have had an enviable time of it, the corporation keeping its eye upon him, for upon one court-day after a man had been presented for 'keeping an illegal instrument called an oven,' and a dog-fancier for 'keeping an unlawful dogge,' the clergyman was reprimanded for 'not wearing his surplice at funerals,' and was instructed always to wear it when he met a corpse, 'whether of the poor or rich;' by which it would appear that he dressed according to his probable fees. At another time, the minister was threatened with punishment if he refused to 'cut his hair of a comely and seemly length, in fair and decent manner, as best becometh a man in his place.' The result of this Damoclean system was the flight of one reverend gentleman, who 'went away without leave-taking.' The Hartlepool council passed a law enacting that any of the corporation, 'whosoever hee or they bee,' attending church and sitting in any other than the accustomed place, was to be fined 12d.; and that 'whosoever of this towne ys found throwinge of anye stones upon the church-leads, shall pay for everie such offence, to the use of the towne, ijd.; and ytt ys ordeyned that whosoever of this towne dothe shoote at or within the churche or churche steeple of thys towne, with gun, cross-bowe, or anie other shott, for the kyllynge of anie dove, pigeon, or anie other foule, shall paye xijd.' A few years earlier, the authorities of Louth had paid 'iiijd. for dryvyng owte pigeons in the church;' and at another time, 'for stopping the holes in the church where the doves come in, viijd.'

The purifying of the streets was the subject of many local acts. The frequency and severity of the plague may have caused the issue of several, but the generality of these enactments seem to have been issued with the view of increasing the comfort of foot-passengers and in some remote degree the

health of the community. At Chester, upon one occasion, when the city was under siege, and disease alarmingly prevalent, the mayor's court ordered 'that the lord-bishop be informed of the unwholesomeness of the puddle in the Eastgate, and the inhabitants be ordered to cleanse the streets before their respective doors *within one month*, under pain of ten shillings.' History has recorded that the same mayor caused 'manie dunghills to be carried away,' and the dirt of 'manie foul lanes' to be removed. The officials of Banbury do not appear to have been equally enlightened, for one of their by-laws of the sixteenth century enacted that 'all people shall cleanse ther stretes and other ground afore ther dores *yerly* afore the feast of Est, upon paine of iij*s*. iij*d*.;' and places in the town were pointed out by them where 'dong and filth' could be laid. At Leicester, even so far back as 1467, a better state of things appears to have been in existence, for a by-law of that date enacted that 'no one lay muck at his door, nor stones, timber, or clay, but remove it within three days.' The Shrewsbury mayor gave a notable illustration of the folly of locking the stable-door after the steed was stolen, for in the year 1644, when the plague was raging terribly, he and his brethren ordered that 'the streets be kept clean *during the present sickly time*.'

Our old legislators seem to have assessed human life at a very low rate. In the sixteenth century, in many towns, any man guilty of the death of another could escape by paying a fine of four pounds, if the deed was done upon a sacred day; and by a fine of forty shillings, if upon any other day. The legislators of the borough of Richmond took a more enlightened view of the value of human life, for in the year 1596 they ordered that 'any person making an affray shall be fined iij*s*. iij*d*.; but if on a market-day, x*s*.; or a fair-day, vi.; and if any blood be drawn, vi*s*. viij*d*. extra.' At Preston, it was enacted that 'if a Burgess wound another, and he shall be willing to agree amicably, he shall give for every bruise the breadth of a thumb 4*d*., and for every wound 8*d*.; and whoever is wounded, may prove what he has lost by the wound, and the other shall return to him what he has paid to the surgeon for healing the wound; and the arms shall be brought to him, and he shall swear upon his arms that he has been wounded, and such things have been done to him, and that, if his friends consent, he will take what is offered to him.' It is but just, however, to our old legislators to say that they did their best to prevent affrays from taking place. At Chester, the mayor and his brethren enacted that, in consequence of the 'great occasions of wantonness, brawls, frays, and other inconveniences as thereby doth and may arise among youth and light-disposed persons,' taverns and alehouses should not be kept 'by any woman *between fourteen and forty years of age*, upon pain of a fine of forty pounds. At Liverpool, it was illegal for a bachelor to be out in the streets after nine o'clock p.m.; but at Leicester, some little latitude was allowed, the order of that town being that 'no one walk after nine of the bell be stricken in the night, without light or without cause reasonable.' Unfortunately, this licence seems to have been attended with the most unsatisfactory results, for a few years afterwards, a fresh law was enacted, providing that, in consequence of a man having been killed in the streets at night, 'no person of

what degree soever shall go in the streets after nine o'clock, except the watch or officers, or remain in any alehouse after nine of the night, upon pain of xij*d*., and the alehouse-keeper, xij*d*.' The mayor of Liverpool also ordered that cudgels were not to be carried in the streets; the Leicester order going further, and ordering that 'no one in town bear any weapon except in support of the mayor, but a knight or esquire may have a sword *borne after hym*. Every countryman shall leave his weapon at his inn, and bear it not in town, on forfeit of the weapon, and his bodie to prison as long as the mayor likes.' Surely these enactments say something in favour of the absence of the garrotting fraternity. The authorities of Richmond appear to have been determined to do away with the very appearance of evil, for their orders included one thus worded: 'Every single woman, not being lame, and not herebefore lawfully married, shall, at or before Martinmas next, leave off and give over keeping of any house or chamber by herself, and either provide herself for service, if she be so able, or otherwise place herself in house with such a widow or housekeeper in this town, of good repute, as Mr Alderman shall allow to think meet and proper.' Exceptions, however, were made in favour of widows and any woman able to keep 'two servants at the least in her house with meat, drink, and wages.' In the year 1564, the corporation of Banbury decided that 'geeses or doukes' should not be allowed to go into the town brook, and that pigs were not to go into 'anie strete wherein market ys kept.' At Richmond, in 1574, the corporation, after ordering that 'no one winnow any corn in the street unless they carry away the chaff,' enacted that swine-troughs should not be set in the streets, and that 'no man suffer any swyne to come into the market-place upon fair-days, or any other market-days, upon pain of vj*d*.; and further, that all swyne be ringed, on pain of every default vj*d*.' At Hartlepool, in 1599, the council passed a by-law enacting that 'whosoever hee bee of this towne yt keepeth anie mastive dogg w^{thin} this towne nott musseled in the daye, and in the hous upon the nyghte, shall pay for everie such default iij*s*. iij*d*.;' and also 'ytt ys ordeyned yt noe inhabytante of this towne shall keepe anie geese or swyne w^{thin} ye precyntes of this towne, except upon ther own back-yard [or swyne-stie], upon paine to paye, for everie swyne which shall bee taken abroad, xij*d*., and for everie goose vj*d*.' The Newcastle authorities seem to have considered the pig a very serious offender, for they appointed a man named 'the hougher,' whose duty it was to chase any pigs he observed in the streets, and sever the sinews of their hind-legs. Perhaps, however, the corporation of London exceeded all others in stringency. History does not record their troubles with the pigs, but of dogs they seem to have had more than enough. It was a general idea that dogs conveyed the plague from one place to another, so in plague-time (1663 or thereabouts) the lord-mayor and council proclaimed that they had enacted that every dog found in the streets should be killed, and that a man had been appointed to the office. The same year, the churchwardens of St Margaret's, Westminster, paid to 'John Welch for the killeinge and carreinge away of dogges during the plague, and for the putteinge them into the ground and coveringe the same, iij*s*. iij*d*.' and in the year 1603 the churchwardens of the same parish paid for the

slaughter of 'three hundred and twenty-seven dogges at 1d. a peece.'

Fires appear to have been of almost as frequent occurrence as plagues, and in many towns, at the admission of freemen, the successful candidates were requested to pay various amounts 'for hooks,' instruments for pulling houses down with during conflagrations. At Rye, each individual paid twelpence. At Leicester, about the year 1600, it was enacted that every alderman should keep two buckets 'at ther own charge,' and every 'able commoner one a peece,' for the use of the public in such emergencies. In the year 1674, the mayor of Harwich, upon his accession to office, presented the town with twelve buckets, 'upon wch was put his name and arms;' and he also ordered that every freeman upon his election should give one. In course of time, buckets were so plentiful, and fortunately so little required, that a new law was passed requiring a gift of money instead. The mayor of Liverpool prohibited fire from being 'carried from house to house, except it be covered up.'

It would appear, however, that the subject above all others which took up much of our old legislators' time was that of 'foreigners.' In most parts of Lancashire, at the present day, it is customary to speak of a person, even from the very next village, as a 'foreigner;' and at the time to which we allude, the designation seems to have been in general use throughout England, and the authorities seem to have been anxious to keep them so. At Evesham, in the year 1611, a law was passed by the mayor and corporation, enacting that 'no householder or other shall entertain any inmates, poor strangers, person or persons, under a penalty of five pounds.' This looks very inhospitable, to say the least of it; but the Evesham legislators do not appear to have been in advance of the age, for they also prohibited the erection of cottages, and the conversion of out-houses into dwellings, 'because that great inconveniences have been found to grow by the erecting and building of great numbers of cottages.' At Lancaster, it was ordered 'that no person within the towne take anie inmate, or suffer anie to dwell upon their back-yard, upon pain to forfeit for everie default, xs.;' and strangers were prohibited from coming into the town until they had permission from 'Mr Mayor, his brethren, and xv of the commons.' It was also ordered that, if 'any troublesome person come to the town against the peace, to vex anybody in the town, the common bell shall be rung a good while or space, and that all the town dwellers shall come unto the place where the said common bell is rung, arraied in the best manner they may, for defence of their own bodies, to arrest the said disturber coming against the place, under pain for every one that do absent themselves away, vjs. viiijd.' Another act, however, emanating from the same source, provided that 'no inn-holder shall refuse any stranger that seemeth honest and able to pay.' At Banbury, people were not to receive any inmate or under-tenant without a licence from the mayor; and if they persisted in doing so, and kept any such visitor thirteen days, they were fined forty shillings, and lost their freedom of the town. At Rye, 'foreign strangers' were visited with severe displeasure. The Preston by-laws speak of 'foreigners and strangers, and other enormities,' and prohibited any one from receiving a stranger, unless they were willing to give security for any expenses

he might cause to the town. If, however, the Prestonians were resolved to imitate the Samaritans by taking into their houses any distressed creature, they were compelled to pay a fine of six shillings and eightpence *weekly*, during the visitor's stay, to the bailiff, one of whose duties it was to see that no little stranger was born in the town.

Most of these enactments, it is but just to say, were passed mainly with reference to vagabonds roaming about and living upon their wits, for the Lancaster orders are supplemented with one providing that 'vagabones and idle young persons shall be carted or scourged forth of the towne;' and 'foreigners' were permitted to take up their residence, if the mayor and his brethren thought proper, after they had said what 'skill' (trade?) they meant to follow. At the first glance, our ancestors would appear to have been rabid monopolists, but their orders will in many cases bear investigation, and if taken in connection with their surroundings, do not seem nearly so restrictive and injurious as a brief glance would lead one to infer. In most places, a probationary term of residence was appointed, at the expiration of which, the foreigner, if 'desirous and worthy,' might become a freeman of the town. At Rye, the time was a year and a day; at Lancaster, one year, 'during which time his neighbours may know his conversation, manner, and behaviour.' At all places, however, the 'foreigner' taking up the freedom of the town paid a much larger fee, in most cases amounting to twice that paid by any native. In one or two towns, there were exceptional times during which strangers might come and endeavour to sell their goods. Preston was one of these liberal places, for the free burgesses of that town, upon taking office, each affirmed that he would 'color no foreiner's goods,' under or in his own name, 'whereby the king or this town might or may lose their customes or advantages;' and also that he should 'know no foreiner to buy or sell any merchandise, with any other foreiner, within the town or franchise thereof, except at the fair times.'

The licensing system was another fruitful cause of litigation. Acts upon acts, and order after order were enacted, and issued with reference to inn-holders and their customers. It is evident that dear, reprehensible, old Falstaff would have had hard times of it at Leicester, for the council of that town enacted, in the year 1564, that 'no town-dweller shall sit and tittle in any alehouse; but if any such will drink ale or beer, they shall send for the same to their own houses, upon pain of iijjs. iiijd.' About the year 1570, they ordered that 'no person visit or resort to any inn on any Wednesday, Friday, or Sunday, or other holiday in time of service, catechism, or sermon, upon paine of xijd., and that on other days none tarry ther tipping above an hour in a day, upon the like paine.'

One would have thought that after all this legislation the streets would have quiet by night; but such does not appear to have been the case. Sweet memories of Dogberry and Verges come over us as we turn to the enactments bearing upon the institution of the 'night-watch.' In most towns of any note, after the passing of the acts of parliament 13 Edward I. and 5 Edward III., by which a watch was ordered to be kept, by-laws were passed regulating the duties and positions of the custodians of the night. At Rye, any person refusing to watch from sunset to sunrise, after he

had been 'warned' to do so by the town-bailiff, was liable to a fine of twelvepence, and every captain of the watch refusing was fined two shillings. There was a captain and four, six, or twelve men to each ward. It is to be hoped that female housekeepers were allowed to provide substitutes, for it is no unusual thing, in searching the old records, to find such entries as—'Captain Mrs Thomas Miller; constables Alice Burnash, widow; Mrs Fanway; Widow Chambers,' all of which names stand in the Rye lists for the 17th century. The old legislators did not cease from their labours without having looked after and legislated about the amusements of the people. Many towns possessed people's bands or town waits. They may have had 'Sunday bands,' too, but we have not been able to trace any reference to such institutions. At Leicester, in the year 1575, it was ordered that the 'town ways,' in consideration of the money they received from the taxes inflicted upon every housekeeper 'of reasonable ability' for their support, should 'play every night and morning *orderly* both winter and summer.' The mayors of Liverpool and Richmond had power to order them to play before their doors whenever they thought fit. Many are the allusions in the old records to sums expended for 'gowns and collars' for them, which seems to shew that they must have been favourites, or that the council grew less liberal, for in the year 1720, although one pound was paid for 'a gowne for the bedle,' that official was ordered to pay the money back 'into the common fund at 2s. a week.' With the view of protecting their own musicians, the council enacted that 'no stranger ways, or minstrels, or other musicians shall come into the town to play at weddings or fairs, or any other times;' and also, that 'no strangers, *though they dwell in the towne*, shall play at any man's house, door, window, or at any wedding, the time of the assizes only excepted, and then to play *only to strangers*, provided the towne ways keep the towne and play about the towne both evening and morning, continually and *orderly* at seasonable times.' The waits were not proof against success; they gave another illustration of the proof of the old adage, 'Pride must have a fall;' for in the year 1600, the council passed an order, that 'the town ways, because they cannot agree together, are now dismissed being the town ways.' Other musicians, more likely to remain orderly, were appointed, the only drawback being that the council ordered that every member should pay 'xijd. quarterly' towards the support of the band. In most towns where the luxury of music was indulged in, the inhabitants were compelled to pay according to a graduated scale, drawn up so as to suit the means of every householder; so that it would appear, after all, that for the only whistle the legislators provided them, they themselves were compelled to pay.

LADY FLAVIA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LORD LYNN'S WIFE.'

CHAPTER XI.—A CORNER OF THE VEIL IS LIFTED. SHAKESPEARE, when he drew the portrait of Titania, the petulant elfin-queen, at the height of her quarrel with King Oberon, must surely have been haunted by such a face and such a figure as those that belonged to the occupant of the pretty pink rooms in the west wing of Lord Mortlake's mansion. Be

that as it may, a student of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, could he have, Asmodeus-like, unroofed Lady Flavia Clare's own particular suite of apartments, immediately after her rejection of Lord Hythe's matrimonial proposals, might have imagined that he had before his eyes the actual presence of the Fairy Queen herself. There was the same air of baby royalty about the proud pure brow, about the carriage of the graceful little head, about the very tread, that are essential to the true rendering of the moody majesty of elf-land. A starry diadem would well have become that haughty little head; a rainbow-tinted wand would have been no unmeet sceptre for that small white hand—small, but not weak, and which crisped and clenched itself fiercely, as if its owner longed to tear some invisible object of hatred limb from limb.

She threw down her hat and driving-gloves, shook back the heavy mass of her curls, and looked long and steadily at her own reflection in the great pier-glass before her. The glass had seldom, perhaps never, imaged back so much beauty—certainly not beauty of so peculiar a character. That rippling flood of ebony hair would alone have been the pride of a plainer woman, and she wore it according to her own pleasure, in her careless childish fashion, in spite of the feeble remonstrances of the countess and her daughters. But though the Ladies Caroline and Julia felt themselves in duty bound to protest against irregular modes of wearing the hair, they were hardly sorry to find that the little rebel, to whom their advice was addressed, chose to keep to her wilful way. It would have been a pity, they owned, to imprison all those glorious waves of glossy silken ringlets in plain tight braids, like those worn by ordinary mortals. The heavily-twining curls suited their owner too—a youthful, sunny creature, whose life seemed to be all summer. But she looked angry enough now, as she stood gazing at her own face in the glass, and from her blue eyes flashed the cold incisive glitter, as of steel suddenly drawn, that rarely sparkled there, and never without deep meaning in its ominous lustre. Her lips were slightly parted, and her little white teeth gleamed between them like those of a tiger-cat.

'I did not dare!' she said, in a low bitter tone of rage. 'I led him on to speak. Yes, my woman's heart craved that poor triumph. But I could not accept the offer, though I schemed and planned to bring it about. I—I—Flavia Clare, was obliged to yield up what I had resolved to win, but dared not retain. I, who have dared so much, am baffled now. I—dared—not—accept.' She uttered these last words very slowly, and with a kind of cruel relish of the very pain they evidently cost her; and then her eyes shone like daggers flashing forth at a tyrant's breast, and a flush of wrathful colour turned her pale cheek to scarlet. 'So much the worse for me—so much the worse for others,' she murmured in a more subdued tone, and she turned away. In a moment more, she was singing to herself as she moved about the room, taking off the braided paletot of black velvet which she had worn out of doors, smoothing the tumbled gloves that had been so roughly plucked off, caressing the dainty hat and its crushed feather—all of which were somewhat the worse for the brief ebullition of temper, of which they had been the unoffending victims. The smile had come back to her lips;

the dangerous light was no longer to be seen in her blue eyes, lucid as a Grecian sky, and all her pretty, half-unconscious graces of look and movement had returned. In a wonderfully short time, she had made ruffled feather, and squeezed hat, and crumpled gauntlets nearly as trim and new as before she had used them with such abrupt disfavour. She was in the habit of doing much more 'for herself,' as the phrase goes, than are most young damsels of her position. Simmons considered herself as rather an injured person than otherwise, in having so much easier a place than she had anticipated. But her mistress said, with playful peremptoriness, that she had been accustomed to wait on herself while at the convent of Our Lady of Carmel, and that she had not the slightest intention of following any other rule than that of her own whims. Accordingly, though Simmons secretly grumbled that her lady was not delivered into her hands like a lay-figure, to be dressed and laced, combed and padded, tightened and tormented, according to her will and pleasure, she was forced to content herself, like a member of the *noblesse de robe*, in old France, with her *grandes entrées*, and to leave her mistress alone until the half-hour bell should announce the approach of dinner-time.

It is not impossible that Lady Flavia Clare had reasons of her own for declining to submit herself to the condition of absolute helplessness which her Abigail—who was a person of vast experience, having served the daughters of three peers, who were civil to her; the spoiled only child of a great brewer, who treated her with a harsh insolence which, as the maid said, 'flesh and blood couldn't endure, not at no salary;' and the offspring of a bishop, who was, I believe, afraid of her—considered a necessary adjunct of aristocratic existence. For the orphaned daughter of the late master of Harbledown had need of some place and time for thoughts, and deep thoughts too, to judge by the frown that not seldom darkened that candid brow, behind which one might have fancied no cares weightier than such as concerned the hue of a ribbon or the trimming of a ball-dress could harbour. She had a habit, too, much less frequent in real life than it is in books, and never very general with her sex, that of thinking aloud. As a rule, people who indulge in the perilous practice of soliloquy, are either hermits, unused to any company but their own, or they are those who, from disposition or necessity, act a part when before the world. But it would surely have been rash to include Lady Flavia Clare in either of these categories, though she was somewhat addicted to the trick—for a trick it is—that has supplied our playwrights, from the Swan's days downwards, with much of their best opportunity for the dissection of the human heart.

Tap, tap went some discreet knuckles against the door of the pink sitting-room, and Lady Flavia, from the pink bed-room, bade Simmons come in. But it was not Simmons who entered, with deferential cough and rustling silken skirt, in the pocket whereof jingled the keys of office; it was Benson—Benson the housekeeper—and she brought with her a letter, lying on a little silver-gilt salver.

'I beg your Ladyship's pardon'—indeed, she said la'ship and parding, for years of rule over an earl's domestics had not obliterated the original Cockney in the housekeeper—'but an answer being required,

and Simmons having stepped out as far as Rev. Mr Blick's at the vicarage, I brought the letter myself.'

There was no apparent need for Mrs Benson's apologetic tone; but the servants, with that fine instinct which servants have, all stood in great awe of doing or saying anything that might occasion displeasure to Lady Flavia. In their eyes, she was a very, very grand lady—much grander than the present earl's daughters—much grander than the countess, whose bread they ate, and whose heats they did. Many causes may have co-operated to bring this about, such as the fact, that the orphan girl was born in the purple, so to speak, and that nothing but her sex and the quasi Salic law of entail prevented her from possessing Harbledown in her own right; while the Hythe family had always been poor for a baronial household. But it is probable that the estimation in which Lady Flavia Clare was held depended mainly on personal character, on the same causes which made Leo her slave, and the black ponies submissive to her guidance. The lookers-on, it is said, see most of the game. Certainly, there are those whose dispositions are better understood in the kitchen, where they do not pass their time, than in the drawing-room, where they do. So in Harbledown, all gave way to this young girl, who never said one unkind word to her inferiors, who was always polite to every one, yet who, by some delicate tact, seemed to give her courtesy the weight that attaches to the civilities of royalty itself. The grooms never kept her waiting when she suddenly ordered round her ponies. The old coachman never grumbled when she took him and his great iron-gray horses up to the most back-breaking hills, through the narrowest lanes, or over the most stony moorland tracks, in the country round. Jones, the head-gardener, lost his pomposity and his Latin when he offered her floral homage in the shape of bouquets of his best flowers. Mrs Benson would have let her turn the house, to use her own figurative phrase, 'out of windows,' without so much as a moan of remonstrance.

Lady Flavia was gracious to Benson. She took the letter, opened it with fingers that did not tremble. Ah! how that little hand had quivered in Lord Hythe's grasp, and yet if the heart that belonged to the hand's owner beat quickly then, it throbbed wildly now. But deferential Mrs Benson could not see into Lady Flavia's heart. She did not know how fast the pulses beat, how swiftly ebbed and flowed the rushing blood, under that mask of ice. The becoming light reflected from the rose-pink hangings allowed even the paling hue of the tell-tale cheek to pass unnoticed, and the housekeeper only saw a young lady, who, with an air of easy indifference, was glancing over the contents of the letter.

'O dear, how tiresome!' Benson pricked up her ears, for she was not without her fair share of curiosity, and the letter was certainly in a man's handwriting, a great, bold, black hand, and sealed with a big red seal, on which were armorial quarterings not a few. 'O dear, how tiresome! I cannot write just now. Say, if you please, I will send an answer.'

These words, spoken with consummate coolness, sent Benson downstairs to tell the under-butler to tell the messenger, now refreshing himself with ale and beef in the servants-hall, that he might

go back empty-handed, for her ladyship would send an answer. We may be pretty sure that that messenger, an oafish lad, sub-hostler at a second-rate inn, had been fairly pumped for such intelligence as could be extracted from him. But neither John nor Jane, nor Susan nor Mr Hedstall the coachman (who had driven three Earls of Mortlake), nor even the great Mrs Cook (for the earl had not, as yet, enlisted foreign talent in the shape of a white-capped *chef*), could find out anything but that the lad came from the *Nag's Head*, at Chartley Parva, three miles from Chartley Town; and that the 'genelman' who committed the letter, with half-a-crown and a curse, to his keeping, was a tall young chap, 'main' well dressed, and who smoked cigars, wore moustaches, and had the look of a soldier-officer. His name had not transpired, but he had already spoken to the landlord on the subject of purchasing a likely saddle-horse, whence it was conjectured that he meant to make some stay in those parts.

Meanwhile, Lady Flavia Clare read the letter over once, twice, thrice—it was not a long one—and then she tore it deliberately into fragments so small, that if Hop-o'-my-Thumb had used the pieces to mark his way back along the winding road to the home of his unnatural parents, he would have wanted keen eyes to distinguish those tiny snow-flakes of white paper. She seemed to take some sort of pleasure in the destruction of this letter, and when she had rent the paper into the minutest possible state of subdivision, she carried the heap into the next room, threw it into the fire, and watched the flames devour it. Then she went back, walking with a slow, uncertain step, like one recovering from a long illness, and there was an ashen-gray tint spread over her lovely face, like that which darkens the faces of the dying. She held up her right hand, that pretty little white hand, with its dimples and its slender fingers, tipped by such nails as we do not see twice in our lives, perhaps—transparent, filbert-shaped, rose-coloured—a hand so beautiful that it would have seemed an outrage against taste to put gemmed rings upon its fingers. 'There is no stain, is there?' she said, in a low dreamy voice; 'no stain like that on the hand of Lady Macbeth. Ah! what right have I, with my convent breeding, to know so much as the name of the wicked thane's wicked wife. Bah! we are wiser in the nineteenth century. We don't commit our crimes in the old coarse way, and the blood is not to be seen on our palace floors any more. But, knowing what I know, and being what I am, you have done a wise deed, Basil Royston, to come here and try to bend me to your will. A wise deed! But wait, and see the end of it! And here an involuntary shudder crept over her from head to foot, and she turned away from the looking-glass, and, with a smothered cry of actual pain, flung herself down on the bed, and writhed there, like a crushed worm. 'Oh, give me back my old self—give me back the days that are gone, when a living human heart was in my breast, and not this fire and gnawing torment!' such were the wild words that broke from her lips, wrung forth by no counterfeited anguish. 'Let me dare to pray! let me look at innocent children without feeling as if there were a great gulf fixed between their lot and mine; as if I were in my place of punishment, but in view of Eden and its radiance. Ah me! I am surely one of those accursed ones, with a

heart of fire in their tortured breasts, that roam in the Halls of Eblis—I read of such things once in a strange book—*Vathek*—was it not—but I did not know how true those seeming fantasies could be. Yes, I suffer already, but not often—I am so hard. Yes, I am not often such a fool, whining like a sick school-girl.' And here she slowly rose, and lifted her haughty little head with the old imperial prettiness. 'I serve a master who allows of no drawing back on the broad downward road. I have chosen, and must be firm to the black banner. But I am no dupe, to work for others. What I have done was for myself, not for them. And I will be Countess of Mortlake yet.'

By this time she was in front of the pier-glass again, and with a woman's instinct, was adjusting her crushed dress, and smoothing back the tangled masses of her unrivalled hair. 'I will be Countess of Mortlake yet, a peeress of England, and a queen of fashion. I shall make some stir among them—those pale inanities—in their Belgravian drawing-rooms. Hythe will be proud of his wife. He is a good fellow, a good, dear fellow—even I see that. Had I been as I once was—' Then came a long pause, and then again she spoke: 'Had I been the romantic idiot I once was, I should not have been content with a red-tape husband, nurtured on blue-books. There is no political career, in England, for a woman. These are not the days of the beautiful duchess, and "Buff and blue Mrs Crewe." But Hythe is a gentleman, the soul of honour; a hard-working, honest, clever man. He will be a cabinet minister. He will be a marquis, and I shall be his wife. And when I die, I shall be buried in a crimson-velvet coffin, with silver-gilt handles, and the bells will toll, and the people will take off their hats as the stately hearse goes by; and the marble under which I lie shall tell future ages what a paragon I was, what a good woman, what a good wife. Yes, but there will be no lie in that. I mean to be a good wife. I mean to be kind to the poor, to go to church, to do my duty in the station in which I am placed, to live and die the best of all the peeresses in the Red Book. Those are my wages—the good-will, the homage, the admiration of the silly world. *Va!* I must play my part out, and be the same to the last. After all, *che sara sara!* Fatalism is a comfortable opiate for such as I am. But, Captain Basil Royston, what a much, much wiser man you would be if you would but leave me alone to take my course, and face my destiny. Well, *che sara sara*, say I for the second time.' And she bathed her burning face and eyes in fair water; and after a little while she went downstairs, beautiful and fresh, without a cloud upon her forehead, and, to all visible seeming, without a care upon her mind.

CHAPTER XII.—A STORMY INTERVIEW.

The *Nag's Head* in Chartley Parva is a large straggling hostelry of the old sort, one of those inns whose sanded floors, diamond-paned windows, large garden, ivied front, and rose-draped porch, suggest the idea of such a place of entertainment as Izaak Walton's Piscator would have elected to dine in on a dish of buttered eggs, a tankard of nut-brown ale, and some trout of his own catching. Nothing could be less like a modern hotel on the limited-liability principle; and nothing could be

more inviting to an angler or an artist than the *Nag's Head*, standing as it did at the end of Chartley village street, and only a stone's throw from one of the finest trout-streams in the county, a stream, too, of whose length two miles could be fished by leave and licence of the landlord.

But late October is not exactly the best season for the practice of the gentle art of sticking steel barbs into the mouths of the Salmonidæ; and there were no anglers just then at the rambling old inn, nor any artists to sketch, for the fiftieth time, its picturesque tumble-down front, with the figures 1693 above the porch; or to stroll about its quaint shady garden, where was a bowling-alley, on whose smooth turf Parson Adams and Squire Western, and Mr Allworthy too, very probably, had long years ago directed their polished globes of beech-wood against the jack. However, there was a gentleman staying at the *Nag's Head*, and one who obviously thought his consequence somewhat impaired by his having to put up with such rustic head-quarters. He was, in truth, a swearing, swaggering gentleman—it was thus the host judged him—and ill-humoured whenever anything went contrary to his desires; but a gentleman still. He had excellent clothes, a heavy portmanteau, and plenty of loose silver, which he tossed about like one born to spend; while he was just as ready to bestow a curse or a cuff on those who offended him, as to fling his contemptuous largesse of half-crowns to those who pleased his fancy. He had lately given charge to landlord, landlady, chambermaid, barmaid, and waiter—which last functionary held the posts of tapster and boots as well—that any letter or message addressed to Captain Royston was to be brought to him forthwith.

He stood in the window, with the dark-green ivy all round about him, like the frame of a picture; and it was undeniable that he was a handsome stalwart gentleman of goodly presence. Compared with him, Lord Hythe's honest face was very homely; whereas the face of Basil Royston was such as generally finds favour wherever ladies congregate. He was a fine florid specimen of the English stock, with waving chestnut hair, clear-cut features, and a long tawny moustache shading his short upper-lip. His teeth were beautiful, and his smile pleasing. His brilliant hazel eyes were not quite so brilliant as they had been, perhaps, for now the whites of them were bloodshot and discoloured, and they had something of a hang-dog glance in them, with all their fierceness. No man can quite hold up his head when under a cloud; and Basil Royston, captain by courtesy, but a cashiered outcast, could not maintain the unruffled demeanour that he would have wished to do. He was expensively dressed—everything he wore was of the best materials—but his old correct taste had deserted him, or rather, being no longer the member of a recognised society, he had indulged his own natural fancy for bright colours and showy contrasts. Thus, he wore a glaring waistcoat, and a gaudy neck-scarf of crimson, and had too many rings on his fingers, too many charms on his watch-chain, too large a pin in his cravat. Trifles these, no doubt, but they spoke volumes of their possessor's state of mind.

The captain—so they said in the bar and in the tap—was a restless gentleman. He went out, trampling impatiently along the garden-walks, and spitefully beheading with his stick the great purple

dahlias, like some dyspeptic Tarquin among his nobles. He went down the village street, kicking the curs asleep on the thresholds, and pushing angrily through the noisy little gatherings of children disputing a moot-point at marbles; and then he would be back again in his ground-floor parlour at the *Nag's Head*, lighting a fresh cigar, and ringing the bell sharply for brandy. 'A large glass, confound you; and look sharp!'

'The captain drinks a lot!' said the barmaid confidentially to the boots-waiter; and that man-of-all-work grinned as he made answer: 'Wants a deal of winding up of a morning, Miss B. And don't his hand shake neither! Blest if I didn't think he'd have dropped the tea-cup at breakfast. But four goes of neat spirit before twelve o'clock is coming it rather strong, ain't it?'

However, the 'hair of the dog that bit you' recipe, murderous as it is, produced a temporary improvement in the nervous system of Captain Royston. His shaking hand grew steady; his bloodshot eye grew brighter; he was quite, to all appearance, a hale and hearty man of nine-and-twenty as he stood in the window, puffing at his cigar, with his eyes gazing out upon the road.

At last it comes, a low, well-hung pony-carriage, drawn by two fiery black ponies, well kept in hand; a young lady in slight mourning, with a white feather like a snow-flake fluttering in the wind, holding the milk-white reins; and a smart young groom perched in the seat behind, ready to jump down and run to the ponies' heads, as he does now. Out comes the hostler to ask what the lady may please to want; his own thoughts being intent on 'bites' of hay, or drops of water for the washing of the ponies' mouths withal. But the captain knows better. He flings away his cigar into the grate, glances at his own image in the slip of glass over the chimney-piece—it is not women alone who peer at themselves in mirrors—and settles his cravat. He is not in the least surprised when the landlady opens the door, and announces that a lady wishes to speak with Captain Royston. The lady is admitted. The landlady retires. The lady, not noticing the offer of a chair, still less accepting the hand that he extends towards her, lifts her veil. He winces, in spite of the brandy, before the defiant loveliness that confronts him with eyes that have no relenting in their blue depths.

'Upon my soul, you are prettier than ever!' blurted out the captain, hardly knowing what he said, as he again pushed a chair towards his visitor. She made him a low courtesy of ironical politeness, but her face was quite grave and cold.

'I did not come to hear compliments from you, sir,' she said, her hostility breaking out in every tone and gesture, in the curl of her lip, in the flash of her eye, in the very erectness of the attitude in which she stood, one hand resting on the table; she looked upon him as if her sweet blue eyes had been the dreadful ones of fell Medusa, and could turn him into stone for ever.

He bit his lip, and the hand with which he stroked back his tawny moustache was tremulous, even after its owner's repeated doses of strong brown British brandy; but he made an effort, and said smoothly: 'Come, come, you are cross with me still, I see, though hang me if I deserve it! You and I were such good friends once; and I wish the pleasant old times could come back, as when I

read poetry to you under the lime-trees, in auld lang syne, and'—

He had begun in an artificial tone enough, but as he went on speaking, he warmed to the matter of his discourse, and there was real feeling in his voice as he spoke the last words, while his look softened, and it was easy to guess that at times there must be a dangerous fascination about the man. His was a corrupted heart, but there was probably a soft spot in it yet; and for one moment Basil Royston looked and felt as if there were no wicked schemes, no sinful pleasures, no court-martial, infamy, penury in the world, but only a shady French garden, with a rustic seat, whereon sat two fair girls, while a tall soldierly young fellow read Tennyson's *Maud* to them in a rich low voice.

But Lady Flavia Clare interrupted him. 'Excuse me,' she said, 'if I cut short your sentimental reminiscences. The past is gone. What might have been does not concern us who have to deal with things as they are. What do you want with me? You sent for me. Speak your mind, and speak it plainly, for I tell you distinctly that I will give you no future chance.'

'What do you mean? Yes, what the deuce are you driving at?' exclaimed the young man, staring at the audacious speaker. 'Are you vexed at my sending for you, as you call it? Pon my soul, I didn't mean it in that light at all. I only thought, and the governor thought, that I couldn't come up to the house—what d'ye call it—Harbledown—without a regular formal invitation from old Mortlake'—

'And that,' again interrupted his pitiless acquaintance, 'you are about as likely to receive as you are to be asked to dinner at Windsor, or to be appointed colonel of your old regiment, the Crashers.'

'Confound you, ma'am, can't you be civil!' broke out the ex-captain in a fury; but instantly, as though seeming to remember his cue, awkwardly began to stammer out some words of apology: 'You see you're so hard on a man, why, too, pray, shouldn't my Lord ask me, if you make him? I'll be bound you can turn every one of the lot round that pretty little finger of yours.'

Lady Flavia Clare's eyes really seemed to emit sparks of blue light as she looked at the man before her. Her beauty was quite hardened now; and she gazed at the captain, his red cravat, his flaming waistcoat, his cheap jewellery, and flashy jauntiness of mien, with something very like loathing. 'I hate myself'—she spoke the words passionately, but so quick and low was the utterance that no ear but her own caught their purport—'I hate myself for ever having given a thought to this'—She left the sentence incomplete, and spoke plainly and audibly enough: 'But I do not intend to ask Lord Mortlake to invite you. Are you so dull of wit that you cannot perceive my meaning, or must I tell you in so many words that I am ready for peace or war, at your will, but not for any renewal of intercourse with you or yours! You had better let me go my way in peace, and'—

Here it was Royston's turn to interrupt. 'By all that's sacred,' rapped out the captain, with an oath that cannot be written here, 'our ways lie together. I begin to see your game, my dear; but that cock won't fight, as my father says. I'm to

be the catpaw, am I? I'm to be your Ladyship's very humble servant, kicked out like a rascal that has stolen the spoons. No, no, my lady, that sort of thing won't do with so old a hand as I am. I came over to England to make you my wife, and my wife you shall be; and I can tell you a home-truth—if it wasn't for your money, I'd look elsewhere; but a bargain's a bargain. It was all settled long ago, and you know it.'

Lady Flavia Clare looked less angry now. A mocking light began to replace the wrathful glitter in her eyes, and her voice was much more amicable as she said: 'I think you were mistaken in not stopping at home, and conducting your wooing by proxy. Your father would have made an abler plenipotentiary than yourself, Captain Royston, for, to give him his due, he is a man, and a bold one. But you—However, I don't want the ponies to catch cold while you and I exchange amenities. May I ask how you intend to hold me to my word, supposing, for the sake of argument, that I ever pledged my word to so utterly absurd a bargain as that of which you speak?'

Basil Royston reddened, and then grew very pale; and he tried to speak, but failed. His features worked painfully, as various expressions, rage, fear, wounded vanity, perplexity, passed across his face. Then he suddenly stepped forward, and caught hold of Lady Flavia's hand, saying in a voice that was not wholly steady: 'Come, darling, let this end. Let us be friends, as we once were. I was in a passion just now, and talked rubbish, but'—

She snatched her hand away, and her eyes were ablaze with anger. Her voice was cautiously lowered, since inn-walls have ears, but it was cruelly distinct as she said: 'Friends! What can there be in common between a cashiered gambler, a broken cheat, a drunken debauchee, and the Lady Flavia Clare? If you dare again to treat me with anything but the respect due to a lady whose acquaintance with yourself, formed beneath the roof of your parents, has induced her to bear with your rude language only too patiently, I shall leave the room and the house without delay. I did not come here to endure insult.'

'Remember!' said Basil Royston furiously, and he shook his uplifted forefinger at her as he spoke—'remember!'

'Remember! Do you think I forget? No; but you would be wise to let your memory be somewhat shorter,' said Lady Flavia, with a peal of her ringing joyous laughter, at the sound of which Basil Royston grew pale for the second time, and cast a wistful glance towards the table on which stood the empty glass that had held the last modicum of his insidious bosom-friend. But he was not defeated, only puzzled. He was not so brave as his father, not so shrewd, not so persevering, though in certain superficial graces he had at one time been very superior to the bluff fox-hunting squire. He rallied his spirits now, composed his features, and it was in a really resolute tone that he said: 'I, too, if I pleased, might use hard words and ugly names, but that is useless now. I find you very much changed. I suspect you have seen some one among the swells with whom you live now, for whose sake you are willing to break your word to me. Were this a common case of jilting, I should not be ass enough to complain. I should take my hat and make my bow; though I can't see why even a Clare should think herself degraded

by marrying a Royston of Royston—my grandmother was Lady Elizabeth Pierrepoint, too, by George; but that's neither here nor there. The point to keep in view is, that I want Cupley Lees and Melshot Friars; the governor wants the ready; and the only way to bring matters right being for us two to marry.

Lady Flavia Clare's manner changed as if by magic, and with a playful gesture she laid her little hand on the arm of her sulky companion. 'Tell me one thing,' she said: 'do you know how they execute criminals?—in France, I mean, you know, not in England. Don't they build up a horrid machine above the scaffold, with a great ugly knife that is drawn up by pulleys and cords, and then, when the poor wretch is thrust through a hole in the planks, with a basket of saw-dust beneath, to receive the head—how shocking!—don't they let the heavy knife fall swiftly down between its grooves, ah! so swiftly, swift as death itself, on the neck of the criminal? Flash! chop! and all is over; so humane, they say, so much better than our clumsy English hanging. Don't you think so, Captain Royston?'

And it was terrible to hear the laugh, so silver clear, so sweet, but with something in it that froze the listener's blood, which concluded these last words of Lady Flavia's. But equally terrible was it to mark their effect on Captain Royston. He sat down, shaking as if in an ague-fit, and great unwholesome blotches of crimson broke out on his pale forehead, and his dry white lips twitched quickly, and he looked quite haggard and old at nine-and-twenty.

He did not reply; but as Lady Flavia, after a pause, went on to speak again, he winced as if she had struck him. He was indeed in a sorry state that morning—a 'cup too low,' as he phrased it, after being many cups too high on the previous night, for he drank for drink's sake now, not for company, as social toppers affect to do. Basil Royston's hard-headed old father had not been very far wrong, after all, in his conjectures that his dissolute son would linger in London, and plunge into a vortex of such dissipation as only a great city can furnish forth. But Mr Royston had guessed wrongly in one point—he had fancied, and not unreasonably, that his hopeful heir would lose or squander the moderate supply of cash, borrowed at heavy interest from an accommodating usurer, that he had carried with him. Such a contingency was probable enough. But a heavier calamity than empty pockets was impending over the head of Basil Royston, and the first steps of the slippery path were strewn with flowers. He had indeed gambled and betted, just as his fond parent had predicted; but, instead of losing, he had won—he won what he called a 'hatful' of money; and his anxiety to bring the business for which he had crossed the Channel to a satisfactory conclusion, caused him to leave London, much to the chagrin of his associates, before he had given the losers their 'revenge.' But though he got off with unplucked feathers, his constitution, previously impaired by a wild life in India, had been severely tried by the late hours, the fierce excitement, and the almost incessant intoxication in which the last fortnight had been passed. Thus it was that the ex-captain's nerves were less than ordinarily fit to endure a contest of wit and will, though even the results of unlimited alcohol

and Haymarket champagne could not fairly account for the prostrating effect which Lady Flavia's words had produced upon him.

She waited to let those words sink deep, and then resumed: 'You wonder, I dare say, how I came to be aware of such dreadful doings, but even in convents we hear an echo of what goes on in the outer world. There was a little ivory model of a guillotine that stood under a glass case in Pierre the gardener's cottage at Grèsmes; a toy that his uncle had carved, he said, when he was one of the French prisoners at Norman Bridge in England, and which remained unsold at the Peace. Grosse Jeanne, too, told me once that she had been with a party of her friends to see an execution at Versailles; and the girl described the scene quite graphically—the hollow square of soldiery, the mounted gendarmes, the cart in which the culprit was brought, with a priest beside him, crucifix in hand; the executioner—"Charlot," they call him, instead of "Jack Ketch"—in his red cap, with bare arms, holding the string; the populace pressing on the square of bayonets that hedged the scaffold; the bright blade poised aloft; every house-top crowded with eager faces—*c'était très amusant*—so Grosse Jeanne declared, honest girl!'

So far the cruel sweet voice went on unchecked; but at last a hollow groan interrupted it, and Basil Royston got up, leaning with both hands on the back of a chair, as if for support, and looked with haggard eyes at his visitor. 'I can't bear this,' he said sullenly; 'and you—you dare to talk of these things in that cool way. But you shen't frighten me; hang me if you shall! Why should I care for your queer notions? The thing's absurd. You can't hurt me without hurting yourself, so I'm safe.' There was a twinkle of reviving cunning in the young man's hazel eyes, and he snapped his fingers in sign of defiance. His voice had something of the old insolent tone in it as he went on: 'I know too much of women's ways, I flatter myself, to take No for an answer. And we are playing a game at Brag, you and I. You'll think better of it, Lady Flavia Clare, when you've had a little more time to see how matters really stand. I shall stay here a reasonable time, say three days, and then I shall expect to be asked over to Harbledown. If I get no invitation, I shall know that you prefer war to peace, and you will only have yourself to thank for what follows. By Jove, you'd better think twice about it before you make us desperate.'

Lady Flavia's accent was one of cold politeness as she replied: 'I have no wish to make any of you desperate; I merely decline the honour of being Lady Flavia Royston, that's all. But I never intended to prove ungrateful for the kindness I once received from your family. For your mother I really feel a sort of affection. I shall be found willing, when my property is at my own disposal, to prove myself the best friend that the Roystons ever had. But, excuse me, Captain Royston, I prefer to manage my own affairs in my own way, and to discuss preliminaries, if need be, with your father, rather than with yourself. Him I intend to get invited at Christmas; and if you will lay aside your ridiculous matrimonial pretensions!'

'Ah! but that I never will,' said Basil doggedly.

'Then,' was the quiet rejoinder, 'I have lost my time to no purpose, and cannot let my poor pets yonder run further risk of catching cold after their scamper. James, too, will wonder what evil has

befallen me, for, I assure you, I am not in the habit of paying calls to gay *militaires* like yourself, captain. Good-morning, but not, I trust for your sake, *au revoir!* With a quick rustle of silk she was gone; and in a moment more Basil Royston saw her take her place in the carriage, receive the reins from the groom, and drive off at a brisk pace. He watched her until the high hedges concealed the last wave of the plume in her hat, and listened till the faint sound of the light wheels died away in the distance. Then he turned away from the window with a sigh of mingled regret and relief. 'Fifty times prettier than ever'—thus ran his outspoken thoughts; 'but she is as hard as flint, for all the innocent smile and the blue eyes. What sort of stuff can she be made of, to carry it off like that; or doesn't she know the danger?' Here he paused, and rang the bell. 'I wonder if she's a flesh-and-blood creature, like the rest of us. I could have fancied her a beautiful devil.' And here the waiter entered, and received Captain Royston's orders for a bottle of soda-water and a dash of brandy—'Just another glass, you know.'

THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

'We are the spoiled children of Europe,' said a clever Frenchman to me one day. 'Every nation learns our language, so that we do not trouble ourselves to learn theirs.' And assuredly the French regard other modern tongues pretty much as the Romans did those of the conquered barbarians. 'Those unlucky English!' continued my friend, 'they eat half their words, and they have no orthography and no grammar!'

Indeed, despite of the increased facilities for communication between the two countries, the *entente cordiale*, linguistically speaking, is far from being perfect. The French of 'Stratford atte Bowe' is almost as diverse from that of Paris as it was in the days of Chaucer. While even in the English quarter of Paris, where all sorts of British garments and comestibles may be obtained, I saw lately announced in a shop in the Faubourg St Honoré, 'Currant Gelli, Currant Gem.' The announcement, 'English spoken,' keeps the promise to the eye, but generally breaks it to the ear, and the words are an enigma to the passing natives. A soldier lately entered a wine-shop in the window of which the above announcement appeared, and asked to be served with a glass of 'English spoken.' The *garçon*, as ignorant as his customer, replied that he was very sorry, but they were just out of that particular *liqueur*. 'Then what do you mean by advertising "English spoken," if you have not got it?' quoth the soldier, as he went off in a rage.

The lady of a house where I once lodged told me that she had been sadly mystified by a former English lodger, who came to Paris determined to storm the French language à coups de *dictionnaire*. Keeping that useful manual perpetually at hand, she used to look for the literal translation of each word in a phrase, and form her sentences accordingly; and the effect was sometimes very comic.

One day she told her hostess that she would feel much obliged by her placing in her bedroom 'une poitrine de caleçon,' which luminous rendering of 'chest of drawers' was, of course, Arabic to the poor Frenchwoman.

A worthy pair of very untravelled Britons came over lately to see the sights of Paris; and while doing the Lions conscientiously, they arrived in front of the Chamber of Deputies, on which is engraved in large letters 'Corps Législatif.'

'What place is that, my dear?' inquired the lady.

'That,' replied her husband, 'is Corps'—beginning to read, and pronouncing the word 'corpse.'

'Ah,' interrupted she, 'come away! That must be the Morgue, where the dead bodies are. I would not go in for the world!'

I remember once playing an international game of whist, in which my partner was a young, newly-arrived American, our opponents being two French clergymen. As each card was played, I repeated the name in French for my young friend's instruction. Clubs happened to be trumps one time, when he had very few in hand. 'Dame de trèfles,' I said, as I played the queen of clubs.

'And that's what I say too, madame,' responded he coolly; 'd—de trèfles!'

One of our adversaries, who spoke a little English, hearing us say 'Trump it!' conceived that it was the name of a card, and remarked, from time to time: 'Ah! I have my leetle trumpets in my hand!' sounding the *th* with particular force and pride in his mastery of that British shibboleth.

In Germany, the same curious misunderstandings take place, and, on the part of the natives, are even more prevalent than in France, for the following reason: a Frenchman, unless absolutely forced to do it, will seldom try to speak a foreign language. He is much too fond of his own, too thoroughly convinced of its triumphant superiority to every other language under the sun, to willingly lend his lips to any barbarian utterance.

A German, on the contrary, loves to speak foreign tongues, especially English, even if he knows but half-a-dozen words of it.

I remember once having to consult a good little German doctor, who was extremely proud of his knowledge of our language. Now, his German I understood perfectly, but his English was a great mystery. My daughter had a bad cough, and I requested him to prescribe for her.

'De Fräulein,' he said, after some consideration, 'must drink de milk of geese: de milk of geese will be ver goot for de Fräulein.'

'Well, doctor,' I said, trying to keep my countenance, 'I dare say it would be very good, but I'm afraid it would be rather difficult to procure.'

'No, no, no; not diffecoolt at all. You do say to de geese to come, and de people dey do bring de geese to your door, and dey do milk dem; and it cost ver leetle moneys, and it is excellént for de sheest.'

What the man meant I could not imagine. The more he continued to extol the virtues of the 'milk of geese,' the more mystified did I become.

At length his meaning flashed upon me. In German, *geies* is a goat, and *geies milch* is goat's milk; so the worthy doctor imagined that of the latter words, 'milk of geese' was a most classic rendering.

Another German physician, prescribing for his patient, said: 'Acid dings will be ver bad, but sour dings will be ver goot.'

'Doctor,' I replied, 'I do not understand you. In English, acid and sour have precisely the same

signification; we say indifferently that a lemon is acid or that a lemon is sour.'

'No, no; it is not de same; it is quite *wass anders*. I do tell to you sour is good, and acid is bad.'

After much altercation, I discovered at last that by 'sour' he meant 'bitter!'

The same physician informed me: 'Dat of all dings in dis world, de most dangerous for de human body was soap.' With some difficulty his patient obtained permission to have clean linen. 'But,' said the doctor, a sudden thought striking him, 'dose sheets, were dey wash wid soap?'

'Yes,' I replied, 'of course; I suppose they were.'

'Den,' he said decidedly, 'some one must sleep in dem first for two, drie days; dey must not be put into a sick person's bed until de human body have breeze drue dem.'

He tried to enforce the same antisaponaceous rule with respect to articles of personal clothing, but there his patient rebelled, and also contrived to indulge in some surreptitious ablutions.

Indeed, those worthy German *savans* often reminded me of the lines:

A plunge after truth would do them good,
If but for the sake of the washing.

In German, the verb *bekommen* means to get or to receive. One day, a lady asked an English-speaking German what would be the best method of ascending one of the Seven Mountains. 'Oh,' he replied, 'it is ver easy. You do go in de train from Bonn, and you do cross de Rhine at Königs-winter, and den you do all become donkeys!'

An advertisement of these said animals, for the benefit of British tourists, was couched in the following terms: 'Pious donkeys can be hired here.' In German, the word *fromm*, when applied to a person, means pious; when to an animal, tame, gentle. Hence arose the ludicrous blunder.

Apart from errors of language, the ignorance of even well-educated foreigners touching everything British, is quite wonderful. Happening lately to speak of the cider in Normandy, a French gentleman said: 'Ah! madame, you have no cider in England!'

'Pardon me,' I replied; 'very excellent cider, and in great quantities, is made there.'

'How!' he exclaimed. 'I always thought your climate was too bad to allow apples to ripen. And how, I pray you, can there be cider without apples?'

Conversing one day with a German *Wundarzt*, or surgeon, I, after the English fashion, began by making remarks on the weather.

'The winter here is colder than in my country,' I said.

'And where is that?'

'Ireland.'

'Ireland!' he repeated. 'I should have thought it was very cold there. Ireland is in Russia.'

'O no,' I exclaimed laughing; 'I think you are mistaken.' And fetching a map of Europe, I tried to enlighten him as to the geographical position of the British Isles; but I fear with very indifferent success.

During the Indian mutiny, a young German lady, of good family, who wrote *Von* before her name, innocently asked a friend of mine: 'In what part of Italy is India situated?'

A Frenchman, professor in a university, and a man of great learning, once asked me whether Cork was in the north or the south of Ireland. What should we think of an educated Englishman asking if Marseille were in the north or the south of France?

FEBRUARY.

THE gray skies weep: not yet the primrose-buds
Peep yellow from their mossy sanctuary,
Beneath the gnarled roots of the grim oak
That skirts their favourite bank; the plover 'wheels'
Across the starved brown heath with dismal note,
Shrill-seeking for the golden-crested crew
Of his companions. The bare hedges quake
And shiver in the ice-breeze, yet withal
Life lurks within the hedgerows; Winter's grasp
Is ever sharpest ere he yield to Spring—
Even as the darkest watch of the dark night
Is nearest to the crimson burst of day!

Perchance the noonday warmth of a bright hour
Lures the cock-thrush to tune his artless pipe,
Half doubtful of the sunshine, half resolved
To break melodious into requiem
For the departing Winter—minstrel first
Of the yet unborn year! But the dull clouds
Drive in a watery group across the sun,
And the deceived and shivering chorister
With disappointed chirp his feathers 'ruffs,'
Lapsing reluctant into silent gloom.

Pierceth the little snowdrop through the shroud
Around her, with a tender forethought thrown
By the white snow her sponsor: floweret first
To brave the not yet softened winter-winds;
As oft some atom of a blue-eyed child
Dares, with a pretty sauciness, the will
Of one whose hand could crush him; confident
In his own winning acts, and reading well,
That to all men of true nobility,
Weak things are strong, since weakness is their strength!

The dormouse stirs not in his stronghold warm;
Not yet the squirrel wakes: Nature withholds—
Far-seeing general!—the signal glad
To open the campaign; her well-trained troops
Must rest awhile, content to wait the time
When she to work once more shall lead them on.

In the clay-ponds the frogs begin to stir;
They cluster, moving 'mid the dark-green weed,
And croak their salutations, changing oft
Their dusky sentinels, and clamouring
With loud important voices, all awake.
From the embankment peers the water-rat,
Deeming it time to move; he ventures quick
A headlong plunge, as suddenly retreats,
With a shrill cry, and then as quick is lost
In the deep mazes of his rushy home.

O wondrous law of never-ending change,
God-stamped upon the Seasons! not one link
Lost in the perfect chain; the golden whole
So bindeth fast in Nature's harmonies
The pattern of her work, that not a thread
But hath its answering thread, no colour rare
But hath its counterpart; sure we who hold
Our little miserable humanity
Akin unto High Heaven, should shrink abashed
In our own petty insignificance,
Our utter nothingness, when Nature speaks—
Nature, whose holiest synonym is God.

Printed and Published by W. & R. Chambers, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH.
Also sold by all Booksellers.